

Troops disrupt anti-coalition activities

Story and photo by Sgt. Greg Heath
4th Public Affairs Detachment

SUROBI, Afghanistan – Just hours after Christmas day had passed, the 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment Catamounts of 10th Mountain Division embarked on their latest mission to disrupt anti-coalition militia activity in eastern Kabul province.

More than 600 soldiers conducted operations for four days along a stretch of the main road that runs from the capital city of Kabul to the eastern city of Jalalabad.

Coalition supply trucks that had been driving along the road en route to Bagram Air Base had recently been engaged multiple times by ACMs using rocket propelled



2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment Soldiers find an unexploded ordnance in ruins outside of a village on the first day of their four-day mission.

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PRT expands missions to Ghazni District

Story and photo by Spc. Kelly Hunt
4th Public Affairs Detachment

BAGRAM, Afghanistan – The Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team has made its debut in the district little by little in the last month and members now consider themselves fully operational even though the facilities are still being completed.

The appeal for stability and security in Ghazni is evident in its history. Ghazni is known as a market city and was the capital of an ancient kingdom that stretched from India to Iran. Trade is the backbone of the area and its southern location makes it territory that coalition forces find vital to their overall mission of installing peace throughout Afghanistan.

“Ghazni is the biggest and most important city on the ring road,” said Lt. Col. Mark Schnur, Ghazni PRT commander. “Ghazni is a strategic position because it is on the ring road and it is also close to the Pakistan border.”

A positive aspect of Ghazni is that it has a very active and pro-

gressive governor who supports the coalition effort and wants nothing more than to improve the quality of life for his people. The population is considered friendly and supportive of coalition presence, which makes the PRT personnel’s mission much easier to accomplish.

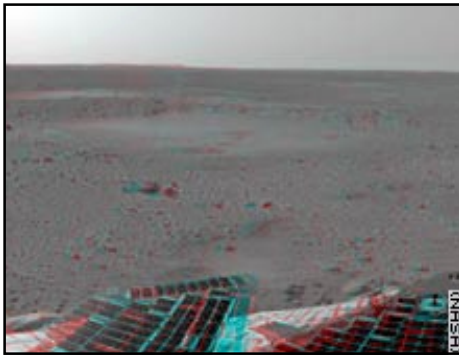
“The Ghazni PRT’s mission is really a three-part mission,” said Schnur. “First to promote stability and security in Ghazni Province. The second part is to promote reconstruction efforts, primarily by NGO’s (non-governmental organizations) and the third part, and really the goal, is the legitimacy and authority of the government of Afghanistan, both the provincial and the national government.”

“Part of the mission is to go in and help build infrastructure, build trust with the local people and help their lifestyle in order to improve the general political situations in the country so we’re not getting hit by terrorists anymore,” said Lt. Gordon Williford, Ghazni PRT physician assistant certified and head of the medical team.

The team will have to face all kinds of opposition and hardship as they conduct their missions aimed to better the area.

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World News (Compiled from CNN.com)



A 3D image from the Mars rover shows a possible mini-crater, upper left, which scientists hope to explore.

Rover sees Mars with 3D eyes

PASADENA, Calif. — On its first full day on Mars, a NASA craft beamed back a three-dimensional panorama of its new home, a tantalizing hint of the capacity of the most sophisticated eyes ever to scan the red planet surface.

The \$400 million rover, expected to send back its first color postcards from Mars within a day, also comes equipped with an unprecedented array of scientific instruments, which could help determine whether the cold, desert world once was a warm, wet planet.

Earlier Monday, the robotic explorer, named Spirit, locked in on Earth with its most powerful antenna for the first time, a crucial technical accomplishment that allows it to beam images and data directly home.

After landing over the weekend, the machine had used the smallest of three antennae to relay brief messages via Martian satellites, but they can only be reached a few minutes a day, when the satellites zoom over the lander.

Now the rover can hail the home planet, when it comes into view, without a middleman for hours at a stretch with its lollipop-like, high-gain antenna.

"It gets you the critical information you need at the end of one Martian day and use it to plan the next day," planetary researcher Matt Golombek said.

Army to delay Soldiers' exits

WASHINGTON — The Army will prohibit troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan from retiring or leaving the service for other reasons for up to 90 days after arriving at their home bases, military officials said Monday.

The American military is suffering stress

from global deployments of tens of thousands of troops in the wake of the 2001 attacks on America.

An Army official said the latest temporary "stop loss" order was to preserve cohesion in units as they reconstitute after serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Pentagon is preparing to begin replacing the roughly 123,000 U.S. troops serving in Iraq and 11,000 in Afghanistan — most of them Soldiers — with fresh troops.

Among the first units rotating home beginning this month will be the 101st Airborne Division from Fort Campbell, Ky.

The Army planned to announce the move Monday, according to the defense officials who asked not to be identified.

There are 1.4 million active-duty troops in the American military, including 480,000 Army Soldiers.



A picture showing the bright flashes that appeared in the sky over Spain.

Hundreds report seeing fireballs fall from sky in Spain

MADRID, Spain — Hundreds of witnesses reported seeing fireballs cross the skies of northern Spain on Sunday in what authorities said may have been a disintegrating meteorite, Spanish radio said.

The bright flashes were spotted at around 6 p.m. local time (1700 GMT) in a swathe across the northern half of Spain, from the eastern city of Valencia to the northwestern pilgrimage site of Santiago de Compostela.

In some cases, objects were reported to have fallen to earth.

"I left the house at around 12 minutes to six. I heard a big explosion, like an earth tremor, and a white cloud of smoke formed around a nearby mountain which took a long time to disappear," a

local official from the northern region of Palencia told the radio.

Civil Guard officials told the radio an object had plunged from the skies in the northern province of Leon.

Spain's civil aviation authority ruled out the possibility of a plane crash.

Jose Angel Docobo, director of the University of Santiago's observatory, said the phenomenon could have been caused by a rock orbiting the sun which had collided with Earth.



A US-VISIT program computer clears student Andres Morales through customs at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in Atlanta on Monday.

U.S. starts fingerprint program

ATLANTA — Up to 28 million visitors to the United States now have to stop for photographs and fingerprinting under a new government program launched Monday and intended to make it harder for terrorists to enter the country.

Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge said the new US-VISIT program applies to any visitors who must have a visa to enter the United States.

By October, all visitors will be required to have a machine-readable passport or some other method of biometric identification, such as fingerprints or retina scans.

"As the world community combats terrorism ... you're going to see more and more countries going to a form of biometric identification to confirm identities," Ridge said.

Citizens from more than two dozen countries, mostly in Europe, aren't required to carry a visa if their visit is less than 90 days. Visitors from those countries are exempt.

Visitors from exempt countries who are working in the United States, however, require a work visa, and therefore must leave their fingerprints and photographs with U.S. authorities.

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grenades, according to 2-87 Commander Lt. Col. David Paschal.

With the entire battalion working together for the first time on a single mission since they arrived in country last August, the Catamounts were able to search three large areas in three days in an effort to find illegal weapons possibly used in the attacks.

"We were able to cover a lot more ground quickly with the whole force out," said Staff Sgt. Charles Haskins, 1st Platoon, Company C.

During the operation, and especially at their final and largest objective of the mission, the dense village of Surobi, having the battalion out in force especially came in handy, according to Haskins.

"I've been to a couple other villages but this is huge, just huge," said Haskins. "This village has alleyways, side streets, different tiers, apartment buildings, it's just crazy."

The battalion's four separate companies were able to split up as they entered villages and each searched homes in their designated

area.

According to Haskins, the searches were, for the most part, "low intensity."

"We try to be sensitive to the (Afghans), we don't just go in busting down doors."

He added that although the battalion didn't face any resistance during the searches, everyone was still glad to be working as a whole battalion in an area that has been known to harbor ACMs.

"It was good knowing that you have companies to your left and right," Haskins said.

In Surobi, the Soldiers got some help from the villagers who led them to a couple different cache sites.

But the most enthusiastic help came from a large group of local Afghan children who followed the 1st platoon of Co. C Soldiers around almost the entire day.

The children led the 1st platoon Soldiers to two different sites where unexploded ordnance was located.

For Haskins and many of the soldiers in his platoon, interacting with the children in Surobi was one of the most rewarding expe-

riences of the mission.

"Hopefully making a good impression with the children now will help our relationship with (Afghans) in the future," said Haskins.

By the time the Catamounts had pulled out of the last village of their four-day mission, they had, in the end, recovered more than 50 RPGs, more than a dozen mortar rounds, a canister of gunpowder, improvised explosive device making materials, and dozens of grenades and small arms.

"I do believe that this mission has made a difference," said Capt. Newton Grant, battalion intelligence officer. "Our operations in this particular area have disrupted the ACMs, forcing them to move to other areas because they know that our presence and the types of operations we're running here will make it extremely difficult for them to do the things that they want to do. The ACM in the area try to instill fear in the people and our presence in the area will give the people confidence that we're committed to rooting out the ACM that live in their communities."

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"The biggest challenge is going to be our first challenge; providing security to the province," said Capt. Dan Verich, Ghazni PRT operations officer. "Ghazni is within the south-eastern sector of Afghanistan so it does have some instability within the region. Providing security and stability are going to be our most important and most difficult tasks."

So far, the team has been received very well throughout Ghazni. Any time they have made their way into a village or to a market area to meet with local officials, the local nationals have been supportive and have welcomed them with open arms, said Verich.

"The local people have stated that they are happy we are here and they are grateful," he said. "We'll see some negative stares, but that's an exception to the rule."

The PRT is made up of several different teams, brought together to support the mission and set apart only by their expertise in various areas.

The civil affairs team sector is responsible for going into the villages to meet the local population, do village assessments and is



Local nationals work together to build the rising wall that encircles the Ghazni PRT. Construction is expected to be completed within the next month.

responsible for planning and monitoring reconstruction efforts.

This team includes the civil military operations center that plans and monitors all operations.

"We also have a security and support detachment which is responsible for base defense and protection for patrols," said Schnur.

Cooks and mechanics are mission essential and keep the team moving. "We also have a medical team that's primary mission is to provide medical

support for the Soldiers here and secondarily, to do medical assessments.

"We're already working together very well," he said. "We've done many missions now together, we've integrated and are continuing to develop our procedures."

Troops are very excited to be in Ghazni, said Verich.

"It's an untapped area and we've been able to make an impact in a short time already," he said. "There's a lot of potential to make an even bigger impact once we're fully staffed and fully constructed."

"I see the coalition being able to make a huge impact in the entire Ghazni province," Verich said.

NCO receives Soldier's Medal for minefield rescue

Story by Pfc. Ryan Smith
Army News Service

FORTBRAGG, N.C.—A Soldier with the 27th Engineer Battalion was awarded the Soldier's Medal at Fort Bragg, N.C., Dec. 18 for his actions in Afghanistan.

Staff Sgt. Scott Smullen, while serving as a squad leader in C Company, 27th Engineer Battalion, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, risked his life to save an injured Soldier and was presented the award by Lt. Gen. John R. Vines, XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg commander.

"Our platoon was conducting mine-clearance operations at Bagram Air Base," Smullen said. "We cleared safe lanes for further mine-clearing operations to be conducted. We use titanium probes - we push them into the ground and feel for land mines."

During the April 21 operation, one of the Soldiers, Sgt. Camilo Molina, was injured in an explosion.

"While we were clearing the lanes, (Molina) stepped on a mine and blew his left foot off," Smullen said.

At first, the engineers didn't realize anyone had been injured.

Once the rest of the platoon was aware of Molina's injury, they had to negotiate the minefield to get to him, Smullen said.

"We were all pretty close to the area, so me and my team leader ran over there and started clearing a safe area up to him," he said. "The first thing we did was make sure he was conscious. He was a little disoriented, of course. My team leader Sgt. (George) Day and I took our belts off and threw them to him - he was about 10 meters away - and instructed him to apply them as tourniquets. He'd injured both his legs in the incident. Once we cleared up to him, the rest of the platoon was on the scene and got him to safety."

Smullen said Day stayed behind him, watching to make sure he stayed in the area he had cleared as he made his way to Molina.

"All the training we did for casualty evacuation and how to probe a minefield really came into play. It flowed like clockwork," Day said. "Everybody just came together."

Bagram Air Base MWR presents

"Daybreak"

1530Z at the MWR building:

Dillan works underground to save the panicked citizens from raging fire, rushing water, and a secret cache of toxic chemicals hidden by a corrupt assistant mayor.

Tomorrow's movie:

"Hulk"



Local weather

TWO-DAY REGIONAL WEATHER FORECAST:

	Today	Wednesday
Uzbekistan:	Cloudy Rain H: 48F L: 38F	Cloudy H: 50F L: 40F
Bagram:	Light Snow H: 41F L: 34F	Cloudy/Snow H: 43F L: 34F
Kabul:	Light Snow H: 41F L: 34F	Cloudy/Snow H: 43F L: 34F
Kandahar:	Light Rain H: 57F L: 36F	Rain H: 57F L: 39F

Weather forecast courtesy of the Bagram Combat Weather Team

Freedom Watch falls under the supervision of the Combined Joint Task Force - 180, and is published daily, Monday - Saturday.

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Freedom Watch, an Army newspaper



publication, is produced by the 4th Public Affairs Detachment at Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan.

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Contents of *Freedom Watch* are not necessarily the official view of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government, the Department of Defense or the Department of the Army.

All submissions are subject to editing for size and content by the 4th Public Affairs Detachment, located in Motel 6, CJTF-180, Bagram Air Base.

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Coalition Sports Zone

(Compiled from *SI.com*)



Patrick O'Sullivan got credit for the winning goal that was caused when Marc-Andre Fleury's clearing pass hit teammate Braydon Coburn.

U.S. wins its first World Juniors title

HELSINKI, Finland – The United States won its first world junior hockey title Monday, beating Canada 4-3 after Canadian goalie Marc-Andre Fleury's failed clearing pass ended up in his own goal.

Fleury's pass bounced off teammate Braydon Coburn and into the Canadian goal with 5:12 left, capping a three-goal rally by the Americans. Patrick O'Sullivan was credited with the winning goal.

"This rates right up there with the Miracle On Ice," said tournament MVP Zach Parise, referring to the 1980 Winter Olympics when the Americans won the gold medal.

The freak goal capped a three-goal, third-period rally against the 19-year-old Fleury, who was the MVP of the 2003 tournament and the first overall pick in the NHL draft by the Pittsburgh Penguins.

"You can say there were a couple of lucky goals, but good things happen when you work hard. You make your own luck," United States coach Mike Eaves said.

Knicks acquire Marbury from Suns

NEW YORK – Stephon Marbury is returning to his hometown to play for the team he grew up watching.

In a blockbuster eight-player trade between New York and the Phoenix Suns on Monday, Marbury, Penny Hardaway and Cezary Trybanski were dealt to the Knicks for Antonio McDyess, Howard Eisley, Charlie Ward, Maciej Lampe, the rights to Milos Vujanic and two first-round draft picks.

"Our goal is to win an NBA championship, and our goal is to put together a team that can do that," Knicks president Isiah Thomas said after making his first major move in his new job.

The trade is the fourth of Marbury's career. The Brooklyn native was drafted by Milwaukee and immediately dealt to Minnesota, where he subsequently forced a trade to New Jersey. The Nets sent

him to Phoenix for Jason Kidd, and he's now headed to the Knicks.

"I think we got the best deal," Knicks center Dikembe Mutombo said. "He's among the best point guards in the league, he's an All-Star player."

The trade represents a major shakeup for both teams and an additional long-term financial commitment for a Knicks team that already has the league's highest payroll.

In exchange for giving up its best player, Phoenix will be under the salary cap next summer and will have at least \$8 million to offer to a free agent class that includes Kobe Bryant.

Yankees lock up Vazquez through 2007

NEW YORK – The New York Yankees haven't finished first without a regular left-handed starter since 1947. Going into the season with an all right-handed rotation doesn't bother general manager Brian Cashman.

With five right-handed starters under contract, Cashman is looking for a backup starting pitcher and sees better quality among the remaining righties.

"There are very few quality left-handers out there," he said Monday. "I'm not really concentrating on any available left-handers out there."

New York hasn't gone with an all-righty rotation since 1992, and hasn't made the postseason with one in 57 years, according to the Elias Sports Bureau, baseball's statistician.

The current projected rotation has Mike Mussina, Kevin Brown, Jose Contreras, Jon Lieber and Javier Vazquez, who agreed Monday to a four-year, \$45 million contract.

Vazquez was acquired Dec. 4 from the Expos in a trade that sent Nick Johnson and two others to Montreal. Vazquez had been eligible for free agency after next season.

"Obviously, pitching in Montreal is not the same as pitching for the Yankees," Vazquez said Monday during a telephone conference call. "All that's acceptable is winning."

The 27-year-old right-hander has been durable — he's the only pitcher with 200 innings, 170 strikeouts and an ERA under 4.00 in each of the last three seasons. While he was 13-12 with a 3.24 ERA last season, the Expos scored 21 runs in the 12 losses and blew four games in which he left with a lead.



Javier Vazquez has been a durable starter, averaging 226 innings per year since 2000.

Afghanistan Hot Topics



(Compiled by CJTF-180 Public Affairs)

U.S. troops hurt in raid in Afghanistan

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan (AP) – Insurgents attacked a U.S. military convoy in southern Afghanistan, injuring two Soldiers, a provincial governor said Monday.

The convoy came under fire Saturday near Deh Rawood in Uruzgan province, governor Jan Mohammed Khan said. He had no details of who carried out the attack or on the condition of the injured Soldiers.

The U.S. military had no immediate comment.

Khan said U.S. troops returned to the area on Sunday, arresting three relatives of Haji Ghulam Nabi, a tribal leader who Khan said had close ties to the former Taliban regime. Nabi had gotten away, he said.

Deh Rawood, where the U.S. military has a base, is considered a Taliban stronghold, and shootings and rocket attacks near the base occur regularly.

An Afghan Soldier was killed in the area on Dec. 2 in a gunbattle between U.S.-led forces and guerillas. A U.S. special forces Soldier died Oct. 30 about 35 miles to the west.

In another incident, the U.S. military said an airstrike destroyed a drugs laboratory in the far north of the country.

Several people were detained by U.S. and Afghan troops in the Friday raid on the lab, some 60 miles northeast of Kunduz, a spokesman said.

An A-10 ground attack aircraft was called in to destroy the facility, which contained about two tons of drugs and equipment, Lt. Col. Bryan Hilferty said.

Some 11,700 Soldiers from the United States and other countries remain in Afghanistan to fight suspected Taliban and al Qaeda guerillas.

\$40m US aid for Afghan bridge plan

KABUL, Afghanistan (PakTribune) – The United States has allocated from \$30 to \$40 million to build a road bridge over the river that separates Afghanistan and the Central Asian republic of Tajikistan, the U.S. embassy in Dushanbe said.

U.S. ambassador to Tajikistan, Richard Hoagland, signed an agreement on the construction of the bridge with the country's Transport Minister Abdu Dzhilil Salimov.

Work on the U.S.-financed bridge linking the Afghan and Tajik banks of the Pyandzh river is to start soon and is expected to be completed within 18 months, the embassy said, reports *Gulf Daily News*.

The project, whose cost was earlier estimated at \$12m, will be directed by U.S. military engineers.

The bridge will be a major contribution to the development of economic ties between Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Iran, according to the Tajik transport ministry.

It will also help speed up postwar reconstruction in Afghanistan by permitting faster travel of humanitarian convoys from Tajikistan, it said.

Tajikistan provided support for the U.S.-led military campaign that overthrew the Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

Afghan leaders adopt new charter

(Washington Post) – After three weeks of raw emotional debate and intense private negotiations, members of a constitutional assembly in Afghanistan agreed Sunday on a new national charter for the volatile postwar nation, clearing the way for its first democratic elections in 25 years.

The 502 delegates accepted a political system with a strong president and a weaker parliament, close to the version sought by President Hamid Karzai and backed by the Bush administration, despite vehement objections from ethnic minority leaders and Islamic fundamentalists at the historic meeting.

"There is no winner or loser. ... This is the success of the whole Afghan nation," Karzai told members of the assembly, or loya jirga, shortly after they stood en masse to endorse the new constitution in a huge white tent on a university campus in Kabul, the capital.

President Bush praised the outcome in a statement from Washington, saying the new constitution "lays the foundation for democratic institutions" in Afghanistan and will thus "help ensure that terror finds no further refuge in that proud land."

The adoption of the charter comes two years after the rout of extremist Islamic Taliban rule by U.S. and Afghan forces. It clears a major hurdle in the political transition that was mandated by the United Nations in late 2001. The government hopes to hold presidential elections this summer, and Karzai is widely viewed as the favorite.

**"Take us around one more time,
I'm trying to max out my frequent-
flier miles."**



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By Kevin Kilgore

Laugh Support